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HIGHLIGHTS/SUMMER 1977

CLOTHING AND TEXTILE DEVELOPMENTS

BANKRUPTCY

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Consumer and Food Economics Institute
Agricultural Research Service
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FAMILY ECONOMICS REVIEW is a quarterly report on research of the Consumer and Food Economics Institute and on information from other sources relating to economic aspects of family living. It is prepared primarily for home economics agents and home economics specialists of the Cooperative Extension Service.

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NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN CLOTHING AND TEXTILES

by Annette Polyzou

Flammability

Finishes. In April 1977, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) banned the production and sale of children's clothing treated with the flame-retardant chemical TRIS (2,3-dibromopropyl) phosphate. Recent studies indicate that TRIS may be a potential hazard as a human mutagen and carcinogen.

The CPSC's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimated that at least 40 percent of all children's sleepwear is treated with TRIS as a flame retardant. Most TRIS-treated sleepwear garments are made of 100 percent polyester. Although all-polyester knits are treated exclusively with TRIS, some other types of polyester garments are treated with flame-retardant chemicals other than TRIS. All-acetate and -triacetate fibers in children's sleepwear, as well as blends of acetate or triacetate with other fibers, also contain TRIS. Garments containing TRIS are manufactured from fibers or fabrics topically finished with the flame-retardant chemical. A certain amount of TRIS is therefore loosely contained on fibers and can be absorbed through the skin or ingested by an infant's sucking on a garment treated with TRIS.

The BEA estimated that the ban of children's clothing treated with TRIS will apply to approximately 20 million garments, sizes 0-14, currently in the retail channel as well as about 7 million square yards of TRIS-treated fabric intended for children's sleepwear. Of the estimated 20 million TRIS-treated garments, about 2 to 4 million have already been sold to customers. The original ban required retailers to repurchase from consumers or replace any TRIS-treated children's wearing apparel, worn or unworn, that has not been washed. Several washings may remove as much as 95 percent of surface TRIS from a garment, thereby substantially reducing the risk of illness from absorption or ingestion of the chemical. The original ban also required manufacturers to repurchase unwashed, TRIS-treated garments from retailers. However, the ban was contested in court, and as of May 5, 1977 the ban required that the costs of repurchase must be distributed among garment manufacturers, fabric or yarn

manufacturers, and TRIS manufacturers. The ban was still being contested as this issue of FAMILY ECONOMICS REVIEW went to press.

Antiblaze-19¹ produced by Mobile Chemical Co. and Emulsion-212 produced by Apex Chemical Co. are possible flame-retardant chemical substitutes for TRIS, although, presently, neither chemical has been tested for carcinogenicity. A safer alternative to chemical flame-retardant additives includes inherently flame-retardant fabrics. Such fabrics include (1) cordelan, sold under the brand names of Matrix, Kohijun, and Vinal/Vinyon; (2) modacrylic, sold under the brand names of SEF (Self-Extinguishing Fabric) and Kanechron; and (3) blends of cordelan and modacrylic with polyester or nylon.

A new flame-retardant finish for cotton-polyester blends has recently been developed by Agricultural Research Services's (ARS) Southern Regional Research Center. No commercial flame-retardant finish presently exists for common cotton/polyester blends. The new finish, Thpc-urea-PVBr, consists of the cotton flame-retardant tetrakis (hydroxymethyl) phosphonium chloride reacted with urea (Thpc-urea) and the polyester flame-retardant polyvinyl bromide (PVBr). Fabric treated with the Thpc-urea-PVBr solution retains more than half its tearing strength, has a good "hand" or feel, and also retains its flame resistance after 50 launderings. Additional research is necessary before the treatment can be made available for commercial use since fabric treated with Thpc-urea-PVBr tends to discolor slightly under certain laundering conditions.

Standards. Current Federal flammability standards include the CS 191-53 Standard for the Flammability of Clothing Textiles, the FF 3-71 Standard for the Flammability of Children's Sleepwear, Sizes 0-6X, and the FF 5-74

¹ Trade names are used in this publication solely for the purpose of providing specific information. Mention of a trade name does not constitute a guarantee or warranty of the product by the U.S. Department of Agriculture or an endorsement by the Department over other products not mentioned.

Standard for the Flammability of Children's Sleepwear, Sizes 7-14. The CS 191-53 standard has applied to all articles of wearing apparel since July 1954, excluding interlining fabrics, hats, gloves, and footwear. This standard was designed to provide minimum protection by prohibiting the manufacture or sale of fabrics and articles of wearing apparel that are highly flammable. The FF 3-71 and FF 5-74 standards became effective in July 1972 and May 1975, respectively. Both standards apply to any article in the specified sizes worn primarily for sleeping, such as nightgowns, pajamas, and robes. Excluded from the standards are diapers and underwear.

The CPCS is considering the feasibility of updating the CS 191-53 standard to provide increased protection from burn injuries related to all apparel items except shoes. A proposed General Wearing Apparel Standard would provide a new test method, the mushroom test, designed to measure the ease of ignition of fabric and the rate of heat transferred from burning fabric to the body. The mushroom test may be a better measure of potential burn injury sustained in real-life situations than the self-extinguishing, vertical test method, now in effect for the specific end-use standards, which measures the rate of flame spread.

The proposed apparel standard would categorize fabrics into four classes according to ease of ignition and rate of heat transfer and would categorize garments into three classes according to specific measurements.

Class 1 *fabrics* would include those which ignite the least easily and/or burn slowly and at a low temperature. Class 4 would include those fabrics which ignite the easiest and burn the fastest and at the highest temperature. Class 4 fabrics would be prohibited from use in wearing apparel except in end-uses approved by the CPCS.

Class 1 *garments* would include those which fit the body loosely, flare away from the body, and cover most of the body, such as tent dresses and nightgowns. Class 3 garments would include tight-fitting garments such as underwear and swimwear.

A balance of safety would be achieved by coordinating garment classification with fabric classification. As an example, garments in class 1 would be required to be made only from the fabrics in class 1. The remaining

classes of garments would be assigned to specific classes of fabrics according to designated garment measurements.

Care Labeling

A trade regulation rule pertaining to the care labeling of textile wearing apparel was enacted by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in July of 1972. The rule was designed to help consumers avoid damage to items through improper care and to inform consumers of the care necessary to insure the utility and appearance of textile wearing apparel. Revisions in the present Care Labeling Rule were proposed by the FTC in January 1976 in order to give consumers clearer and more complete care instructions. The proposed new Care Labeling Rule retains and clarifies certain aspects and expands other provisions of the present rule. The proposed, revised rule specifies that uniform terminology must be employed in care instructions as adopted by the FTC from the American Society for Testing and Materials.

In general, washing instructions must disclose the method of washing and drying and a description of temperatures, the use of bleach and specific type of bleach in instances where not all commercial bleaches can be used, and the use of an iron and ironing temperatures. Drycleaning instructions must disclose the type of solvent to be used in instances where not all commercial solvents can be used. Both washing and drycleaning methods must be disclosed as alternative care procedures for garments other than underwear and finished household items which will not be damaged by either method. The proposed, revised Care Labeling Rule expands the present rule's coverage to include suede and leather apparel, household furnishings, yarn, carpets or rugs, and intermediate components.

Fibers and Processes

Fibers. The current fashion trend toward a natural look in clothing has placed great emphasis on the natural fibers of cotton and wool. Presently, cotton and wool prices are somewhat above competitive manmade fiber prices because of the tight supplies of these natural fibers in relation to demand. Acrylic simulates the natural-fiber look of wool. Acrylic fibers do not felt and are stronger, easier to

care for, softer, and provide more warmth for less weight than wool fibers. Acrylic has been in use since 1950 in apparel (mainly sweaters), blankets, carpets, fleece and furlike fabrics, and home furnishings. In recent months, acrylic has accounted for less than 9.0 percent of total U.S. shipments of manmade fibers; however, the introduction of two new fibers may increase the use of acrylic.

Fina, a 1.2-denier fiber introduced by Monsanto Textiles in November 1976, is presently the finest-denier acrylic produced in the United States. The development of such a fine-denier acrylic will enable acrylics to become an all-seasons product by expanding its market from mainly fall apparel, carpets, and home furnishings to lighter weight goods such as single, double, and warp knits and lightweight wovens, including sheers.

A new acrylic staple, code name ATF-1017, has recently been developed by Bayer A. G. in West Germany. The new acrylic is 25 percent lighter in weight than standard acrylics, absorbs water rapidly and dries quickly. ATF-1017 fibers can absorb approximately 30 percent by weight of water as compared with 40 percent for cotton and wool. In contrast, synthetic fibers have a much lower absorption capacity—5 percent for acrylics and polyester and 10 percent for nylon. The new acrylic's drying properties, tested at 12 minutes, were slightly slower than the 9 minutes recorded for standard acrylics but much faster than the 30 minutes recorded for cotton and wool. In addition, ATF-1017 fibers absorb more moisture than natural or synthetic fibers before giving the sensation of dampness. Such qualities lend the new acrylic fiber to end uses in such areas as clothing and furnishing fabrics where perspiration absorbency is desirable.

Processes. The demand for leather, used mainly in outerwear, has also been increased by the recent trend toward the natural look in clothing. PolyRetan, a new experimental process for producing leather that is drycleanable by conventional methods and in coin-operated machines, has recently been developed by chemists at Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) Eastern Regional Research Center. Graft polymerization—a treatment in which leather is chemically united with a synthetic polymer—and dyeing, and fat liquoring—a treatment which lubricates and softens leather—are com-

bined into one step. Also, the synthetic polymer, the dye, and the fat liquor are united with leather at the molecular level rather than simply coated, mixed, or impregnated, resulting in a leather which resists drycleaning solvents as well as mildew and has excellent strength and improved stretchability. Such properties lend the new leather to end-uses in clothing and upholstery.

ARS's Stored-Product Insects Research and Development Laboratory at Savannah, Ga., has recently discovered that an insecticide, consisting of pyrethrins and piperonyl butoxide, can be used effectively as a mothproofing agent for woolens. Tests conducted on woolens sprayed with the insecticide revealed that the wool cloth was protected from larva of the webbing clothes moth and the black carpet beetle for a test period of 6 months. The insecticide has a low toxicity level to humans and should be available for public use in the near future.

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BANKRUPTCY AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

by Connie M. Hoerman

Consumer installment debt per capita increased 55 percent between 1971 and 1976. For fiscal years 1971 and 1976 the number of nonbusiness bankruptcy filings increased from 182,249 in 1971 to 211,348 in 1976. Bankruptcies are one indication that families and individuals are experiencing financial difficulties. These difficulties may stem from inflation, illness, unemployment, changes in family composition, or poor money management. Families who are having difficulties have several options: They may seek to solve their problems through financial counseling or a Wage Earner's Plan, or they may turn to straight bankruptcy for relief.

Financial Counseling

The major purpose of a financial counselor is to help family money managers obtain a realistic picture of their financial situation and to suggest ways to deal with problem areas before bankruptcy becomes the only alternative. Non-profit consumer credit counseling services can be found in many major cities; and financial counseling is also offered by many local social service agencies, banks, and credit unions. Debt adjusters or debt poolers can be mistaken for financial counselors, but they are actually in business to make a profit from other people's debt. Their policies and practices can lead to abuse, and their services have been outlawed in 26 States and regulated in 15. Debt adjusters or debt poolers will always require that the con-

sumer pay money to them for the repayment of debts, whereas a financial counseling service may or may not handle money for the consumer. By asking to see a detailed accounting of how his money will be used to pay creditors and of the amount of money the company will keep for its services and expenses, the consumer will have some idea of the company's method of operation.

Families who are being threatened by repossession of the family car, foreclosure of the mortgage on the house, garnishment of wages, or endless calls and letters from creditors may wish to consider filing for relief under Wage Earner's plans or straight bankruptcy.

Wage Earner's Plans

Chapter XIII of the Bankruptcy Act, also known as Wage Earner's Plans, was passed by Congress in 1938 as an amendment to the Bankruptcy Act. It allows the debtor to pay off his debts from his regular paycheck while being protected by the bankruptcy court from lawsuits, garnishment of wages or other assets, repossession or interference with his property, or harassment. Within the past two decades, filings under the Wage Earner's Plans have amounted to about 17 percent of all nonbusiness bankruptcy filings. In fiscal year 1976 there were over 33,000 filings.

Only wage earners or other persons regularly employed are eligible to file for relief. Also, the debtor's finances must be at a level such that

debts can be paid off within a reasonable amount of time. In general, the debtor's essential living expenses (food, clothing, transportation, medical, and so forth) must not exceed approximately 75 percent of his take-home pay per month, so that about 25 percent can be turned over to a trustee appointed by the court for the repayment of debts. If the debtor can pay off his debts within approximately 3 years, the plan is generally considered feasible.

A Wage Earner's Plan is an answer for the family who has gotten behind in its credit payments and who merely needs a little time and freedom from pressure by creditors to get back on its feet. If most of a debtor's obligations are for secured loans rather than unsecured loans, he will probably fare much better under the Wage Earner's Plan, if he can qualify, than under straight bankruptcy. Secured loans are generally for such items as vehicles, furniture, or appliances on which the creditor holds a conditional sales contract, chattel mortgage, or security agreement. A debtor could lose these secured items after a straight bankruptcy; whereas, he can keep them after successfully paying off the debt under the Wage Earner's Plan.

The cost of the Wage Earner's Plan includes court costs, trustee's fees and costs, and attorney's fees. Court costs include a \$30 filing fee and 1 percent of all monies paid to the trustee. The court establishes the trustee's fee, which may not exceed 5 percent of all monies paid to him by the debtor; and the trustee is granted an allowance for his costs, also not to exceed 5 percent. The trustee is paid from the money available to pay creditors.

For persons using an attorney's services, the fee runs at approximately \$300 and can be paid in installments along with the other creditors. "How-to" books are available for persons wishing to file their own Wage Earner's Plan, and the necessary forms can be purchased from some stationary stores that stock legal forms. However, many debtors prefer to consult a lawyer, since accuracy in completing the forms is very important and since a lawyer may know of provisions that could save the debtor money. Local Legal Aid Societies may be of help to low-income debtors, and some experienced financial counselors may be able to handle simple Wage Earner or bankruptcy cases.

Approximately half of the people who file under the Wage Earner Plans do not complete their plans as originally proposed. Some persons cannot tolerate the restrictions imposed by the Wage Earner's Plan, such as not being able to incur new debts without the permission of the court and turning over a large part of their check each payday for the trustee to distribute.

Bankruptcy

Bankruptcy is available to burdened debtors through long-established Federal Laws and is provided for by the U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 8, Clause 4). In fiscal year 1976 over 200,000 nonbusiness bankruptcies were filed in the United States. Most bankruptcies are voluntary—only about 1,000 involuntary bankruptcies are filed each year.

In going bankrupt a debtor turns over all his nonexempt property to the court so that it can be sold and the proceeds distributed among his creditors. Often there is little money to distribute, since a debtor's most necessary and major possessions are usually exempt—the equity in his home, the car he drives to work, the tools of his trade, home furnishings, clothing, life insurance policies, and some savings. State laws determine exactly which items are exempt. Debts that cannot be discharged in bankruptcy include certain taxes and wages owed, money or property obtained by fraud, and alimony or child support.

A \$50 filing fee must be paid before a bankrupt can receive a discharge. Attorney's fees in a bankruptcy case usually run from \$200 to \$500 and are often required to be paid in advance. As with the Wage Earner's Plan, the debtor may be able to file the petition and prepare the necessary forms himself, thus saving the cost of an attorney.

Even if a secured debt is discharged through bankruptcy, the debtor may still lose the secured item. The mortgage on his house can be foreclosed and his car and furniture repossessed, if he is still making payments on them, unless the bankrupt works out repayment arrangements with the creditors holding his secured loans. Straight bankruptcy can help persons whose debt is mostly unsecured, particularly people with high medical and hospital bills.

After bankruptcy a debtor may find that his credit rating is much better than it was before bankruptcy, even though his record of bankruptcy will follow him for years. Creditors are often happy to lend to a recent bankrupt since they know he may have extra cash on hand now that he has fewer debts and they know he cannot go bankrupt for another 6 years. For these reasons, a recent bankrupt must be particularly cautious about taking on any new debt. If he gets into debt trouble within

6 years, the Wage Earner's Plan is still available to him and can be used as often as necessary.

Persons desiring more information on bankruptcy and the Wage Earner's Plan should consult a lawyer, Legal Aid Society, or credit counseling service. Fact sheets on these two subjects can be obtained by sending a request to the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, Bankruptcy Division, Supreme Court Building, Washington, D.C. 20544.

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THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF CREDIT CARDS

by Connie M. Hoerman

Over 300 million credit cards are in use in the United States today (4).¹ They are offered by banks, credit card companies, department stores, oil companies, airlines, and other merchants. Most can be used either as 30-day accounts or as revolving credit.

Bank credit cards are the fastest growing type of credit card today. Bank credit cards offer flexibility to the consumer for charging a wide variety of merchandise and services from many businesses on a single card. Many merchants welcome bank credit cards because the store is immediately reimbursed for the charged purchases by the issuing bank. Two years ago only 10 of the largest 100 department

stores accepted bank credit cards, whereas 23 did in the last part of 1976 (2). Merchants must pay the card issuer a certain percentage of purchases charged on bank cards as a service fee, and some department stores not accepting bank credit cards may feel that they can profit more by issuing their own store credit card.

At the end of 1976, over \$11 billion was outstanding on bank credit card accounts, and over \$19 billion was outstanding on consumer installment credit owed to retailers, of which an estimated three-fourths was attributable to credit cards (1). These amounts do not include noninstallment credit outstanding on 30-day charge accounts.

Approximately 80 percent of married Americans in a nationwide survey conducted in 1973 said they had some type of credit cards (7). Over two-thirds of those surveyed felt

¹ Numbers in parentheses refer to References at the end of this article.

credit cards made it too easy to buy items on impulse. The persons surveyed also indicated that credit cards were "useful in emergencies," "good when traveling," "quick credit identification," and "safer than carrying cash"; suggesting that credit cards are thought of as a convenience rather than as a form of debt.

Costs of Credit Card Accounts

By offering credit card services to its customers, a retail establishment increases its operating expenses and hopes to cover these expenses through finance charges received from the cardholders. Since net profit yields on credit card accounts are often low or nonexistent, some economists fear the additional costs of offering credit cards are borne by all customers, including those who always pay cash. One right of cash customers was maintained by the Federal Fair Credit Billing Act, which became effective in 1975 and included a provision that a bank card issuer could not restrict a seller from offering discounts for cash (5). Some credit card companies, such as American Express, Diners Club, and Carte Blanche, charge a yearly membership fee to help defray their expenses, and one New York bank charges customers 50 cents per month when they pay their bill in full (3). On the other hand, a few credit card services now offer a 1 or 2 percent rebate on all purchases charged regardless of whether the customer pays his account in full or in installments (6).

Most credit card accounts not paid in full by the end of the billing period will incur a finance charge. The Federal Truth in Lending laws require that the consumer's monthly billing statement include the dollar finance charge and the annual percentage rate. State laws determine maximum rates of interest. The usual rates charged on credit card accounts are 18 percent on amounts under \$500 and 12 percent on amounts over \$500, although certain States require variations to these amounts.

The annual percentage rate is only one indication of cost. Another determinant of how much a credit card account will cost is the method by which the finance charge is computed. Although many methods exist, the two methods used most frequently are (1) previous balance less payments and credits (used mostly by oil companies and small department stores)

and (2) average daily balance (used mostly by bank credit card companies and major department stores). These two methods of computing finance charges are compared below using the following hypothetical record of purchases and payments. A monthly interest rate of 1.5 percent (18 percent per year) is assumed.

Date	Payments	Purchases	Balance
June 1			\$200
10	\$100		100
20		\$200	300
30			300

Previous balance less payments and credits. With this method the \$100 payment is subtracted from the \$200 balance of the previous month. The unpaid balance of \$100 is multiplied by the monthly rate of 1.5 percent, which results in a finance charge of \$1.50.

Average daily balance. The computation of the finance charge under the average daily balance method is somewhat more complicated since every transaction and every day in the period can be taken into account. The usual method of computing the average daily balance is to sum the account balance at the end of each day in the period, and divide by the number of days in the period. There is, however, considerable variation depending on whether new purchases charged to the account during the current billing period are included in the daily balances.

If current purchases are included, the hypothetical account shown above has a balance of \$200 for the first 10 days, \$100 for the second 10 days, and \$300 for the third 10 days. The sum of the daily balances is \$6,000 ($200 \times 10 + 100 \times 10 + 300 \times 10$), which when divided by the 30 days in the period results in an average daily balance of \$200. This balance (\$200) multiplied by the monthly rate (1.5 percent) results in a finance charge of \$3.00.

If current purchases are excluded in computing the average daily balance, this account has a balance of \$200 for 10 days and \$100 for 20 days, resulting in an average balance of \$133.33 ($\$4,000 \div 30$ days). The finance charge would be \$133.33 times 1.5 percent or \$2.00.

In these examples, the finance charges computed under the average daily balance methods are greater than those computed under the previous balance method, and this would be true in most cases. The average daily balance may not be as advantageous to the consumer as some methods, but it is the most fair to both creditor and debtor, since the consumer pays for the exact amount of the credit he receives.

Managing Credit Card Accounts

By taking advantage of the features of his credit cards, a consumer can minimize the cost of his accounts and maximize his spending power. A consumer who always just makes the minimum payment required and who keeps a constantly high credit balance may find the accumulated finance charges on his account to be almost as costly as his purchases. Managing an account in such a manner would result in the account never being fully paid up.

By watching an account's closing date, a consumer can extend the time between a purchase and the payment. Purchases made before the closing date will show up on the next bill, but purchases made just after the closing date won't show up until the second bill follows. Generally consumers have 25 to 30 days from the closing date to pay their bills. Persons who wait until almost the last day to pay get an additional "free ride," but if time is not allowed for postal handling and company processing, the delay may cost more than the possible savings. A consumer who expects to pay a finance charge computed under an average daily balance method will pay less by minimizing the number of days his purchases are on the account.

Paying bills in person instead of by mail can save delays and postage, but not if additional money is spent in travel to the bank or on additional impulse items when visiting the store. Lumping purchases onto one card rather than spreading them among many cards can save money in more than just postage and minimum finance charges. Most credit cards have a breakpoint such as \$500 at which the interest rate becomes lower. If a consumer were to charge \$800 in one month and have the entire amount on one card, he would be charged a lower rate of interest on the amount over \$500 than if he had spread \$800 worth of purchases on several cards.

Most credit cardholders have more than one card and could use a system to make sure all bills get paid on time. A common method to handle bill paying is: Save credit slips received at the time of purchase to compare with the monthly billing statement and check for errors; place bills to be paid in a spot where they will not be forgotten and mark their due date on a calendar; specify a certain day to pay bills, such as the day a bill is received or the day a paycheck arrives; and save paid bills for future reference.

Many sources suggest that a consumer have a list of all his credit card account numbers and company addresses and telephone numbers in case his cards are lost or stolen. Most companies inform their cardholders what to do when their card is missing, and some provide postage-paid cards or toll-free telephone numbers for this purpose. Cardholders may be liable for up to \$50 in unauthorized charges made on their card unless they notify the company immediately when their card has been lost or stolen.

For a consumer who has many credit cards, the loss of a wallet or purse could mean much time spent in notifying all the credit card issuers affected. For this reason, credit card services now exist so that all companies would be notified of lost credit cards through just one phone call from the consumer to the credit card service. For a fee, such services not only handle notification for and replacement of lost or stolen cards for their members but also can offer emergency cash and airline tickets for stranded travellers, change-of-address services, and fraud warning labels to be affixed to credit cards as a deterrent against unauthorized persons using the cards.

Credit card companies are required to notify customers as to what action to take in case of billing errors. Procedures to handle billing mistakes are outlined in the Federal Fair Credit Billing Act so that disputes may be settled promptly and fairly. Deadlines and other specifications pertaining to errors can vary from State to State.

Cash Loans on Credit Card Accounts

A recent innovation is the use of credit cards to obtain cash in the form of a loan or advance. Cardholders present their cards at designated

locations, such as banks or airports, and charge the cash they receive much the same as they would charge merchandise in a department store. The credit conditions for a cash advance are generally different from those for purchasing merchandise, usually with the finance charges beginning the day the cash advance is made. Also, any payments the customer makes to his account are first applied to cash advances

and finance charges and then to charges for merchandise or services. On some accounts a processing fee is charged for each cash advance, and some companies require that cash be loaned only in certain increments, such as \$100. Conditions for both cash and sales charges will vary among credit card companies and among issuers of the same credit card.

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HOW FOOD DOLLARS WERE DIVIDED, 1965 AND 1975

by Cynthia Cromwell and Richard Kerr

There appear to be many reasons why consumers may have altered their food purchasing patterns over the past 10 years: Increases in food prices, new products on the market, larger number of families receiving food stamps and other food assistance, and shifts in the makeup of the population. A study of two annual consumer expenditure surveys conducted by SUPERMARKETING¹ magazine indicates, however, that Americans allocated their food dollars among major categories of food in much the same way in 1975 as they did in 1965. This was true whether the share of the food market was compared when foods were categorized by the basic four food groups or by degree of processing of the food.

In each survey, consumption—whether at farm level or by institutions, restaurants, government, or households—was included in terms of retail store valuation. Excluded were those portions of a commodity which were used commercially in making some other products, such as the portion of flour output which was used in baked goods reported. Also excluded were infant formula and alcoholic beverages.

Basic Four Food Groups

In the first comparison all food, whether fresh, processed, or ready-to-eat, was sorted into the basic four food groups and the “other foods” group as specified in The Daily Food Guide, USDA Leaflet 424 (table 1). Foods that did not fall clearly into one of these groups were included in either the mixtures or accessories group. In both 1965 and 1975 consumers allocated the largest share of their food money for meat and alternates—more than twice as much as the next highest group. They spent \$37-\$38 of every \$100 for meat, poultry, eggs, dry beans and peas, and nuts; \$17-\$18 for vegetables and fruit; \$12-\$13 for milk and

dairy products, such as cheese and ice cream; and \$6-\$7 for flour and those cereals and breads believed to be whole grain, enriched, or fortified. A little over \$12 went for “other foods”—refined and unenriched bakery products, butter, margarine, oils, sugar, sirups, and molasses, for example. About \$7-\$8 per \$100 was spent on accessories such as coffee, tea, soft drinks, seasonings, and the like.

Foods bought as commercially prepared mixtures (that contained foods from two or more of the Daily Food Guide groups) claimed less than \$5 per \$100 in 1965 and less than \$6 in 1975. This group includes frozen dinners, meat and poultry pies, breaded fish sticks and shrimp, and frozen, canned, and dried soups. It contains other mixtures, such as jellies and jams and fruit drinks that have fruit and sugar in them, and pudding mixes and breakfast drinks that contain milk, sugar, and other foods. This mixtures group does not include mixtures that are identified in the guide as a part of a group, such as ice cream in the milk group and ready-to-eat cereals that contain sugar in the bread-cereal group. The continued relative unimportance of mixtures that cut across food groups offsets to some extent the concern of some people that the use of ready-prepared and partly prepared mixtures makes the Daily Food Guide inappropriate as a tool for food selection.

Degree of Processing

Because supermarkets now display many more processed and “convenience” foods than several years ago, the assumption is sometimes made that the U.S. diet is fast approaching a diet of highly processed foods. However, when the share of food dollars was compared for foods organized by four degree-of-processing categories, plus an accessories group, minimal change was found between 1965 and 1975 (table 2). There was almost no change in the amount allotted to fresh, unprocessed foods; cured, frozen, canned, dried, or refined foods with little change; mixes and mixtures, ready-to-eat or ready-to-heat; and accessories. One category, modified foods with minor ingredient

¹ Formerly called *Food Topics*. Basic data from 19th Annual Study: What Consumers Spend, *Food Topics*, September 1966; and 29th Annual Consumer Expenditures Study, *Supermarketing*, September 1976.

added, showed an 11 percent increase in the share of food dollars allotted between 1965 and 1975—mostly because of increases for process cheese and ready-to-eat cereal.

Fresh, unprocessed foods continue to be highly popular. They accounted for 46 percent of the food dollars spent in 1965 and again in 1975. This was more than twice as much as any other of the degree-of-processing categories.

The Department's Economic Research Service also conducted a study using data from SUPERMARKETING magazine. They found similarity in 1952, 1971, and 1975 in the share of food dollars going to processed versus unprocessed foods.²

² USDA, Economic Research Service, National Food Situation, NFS-159, p. 34, Mar. 1977.

Individual Food Items

The small change between 1965 and 1975 in the way consumers divided their food money among categories of foods masks changes for some individual food items. Some took a substantially greater or lesser share of food dollars in 1975 than they did in 1965 (table 3). For example, the shares going to presweetened cocoa and to process cheese increased more than 100 percent; oils and sugar, about 60 percent; and margarine and ready-to-eat cereal, 40-45 percent. The shares for frozen plate dinners, entrees, and soups, and fresh vegetables (excluding potatoes) each increased about 20-25 percent. However, less than \$1 for every \$100 worth of food was allocated for each of these foods and, therefore, the substantial percentage increases for these individual foods had only a small impact on their group or category.

Table 1. Share of food dollars by Daily Food Guide groups, 1975 and 1965

Food group ¹	Share of each \$100 worth of food ²		Change from 1965 to 1975
	1975	1965	
	<i>Dollars</i>		<i>Percent</i>
Total	100.00	100.00	
Milk	12.09	12.99	- 7
Meat and alternates	37.29	37.65	- 1
Vegetable-fruit	17.80	17.32	+ 3
Bread-cereal	6.77	7.09	- 5
Other foods	12.62	12.47	+ 1
Mixtures from 2 or more groups ³	5.74	4.84	+19
Accessories ⁴	7.69	7.64	+ 1

¹Foods are sorted by food group as specified in The Daily Food Guide, USDA Leaflet 424, insofar as possible.

²All consumption--whether at farm level or by institutions, restaurants, government, or households--is given in terms of retail store valuation. Excluded are those portions of a commodity used commercially in making some other products, such as the portion of flour output used in baked goods reported as consumed. Also excluded are infant formulas and alcoholic beverages.

³Frozen prepared foods such as dinners and meat and poultry pies; fish sticks and breaded shrimp; frozen, canned, and dried soups; jellies, jams, and preserves; pudding and custard mixes; toppings; sauces and gravy mixes; dry potato mixes; canned and frozen fruit drinks; prepared food drinks, breakfast drinks; other new food products not classified.

⁴Coffee, tea, cocoa; soft drinks; leavening agents, flavorings, condiments.

Source: *Food Topics*, 19th Annual Study: What Consumers Spend, September 1966 issue; and *Supermarketing* (formerly called *Food Topics*), 29th Annual Consumer Expenditures Study, September 1976 issue.

Table 2. Share of food dollars by degree of processing, 1975 and 1965

Processing ¹	Share of each \$100 worth of food ²		Change from 1965 to 1975
	1975	1965	
	<i>Dollars</i>		<i>Percent</i>
Total	100.00	100.00	
Fresh, unprocessed	45.75	46.35	- 1
(Milk, cream; meat, poultry, seafood, nuts, eggs; vegetables and fruit)			
Cured, frozen, canned, dried, or refined with little change	17.31	17.43	- 1
(Evaporated and dry milk, natural, cottage, and pot cheese; cured pork and fish, bacon, frozen and canned meat, poultry, seafood--not breaded, canned and dry beans and peas; frozen, canned, and dry vegetables; frozen and dried fruits; flour, meal, hot cereals, rice, macaroni products, infant cereals; fats, oils, sugar, sirup, molasses)			
Modified, with sugar or other minor ingredient added	9.27	8.35	+11
(Condensed milk, process cheese; frankfurters, cold cuts, other sausage products, peanut butter; canned fruit, frozen fries and other potato products, olives, pickles, relish; cereals, ready-to-eat)			
Mixes and mixtures, ready-to-eat or ready-to-heat	19.98	20.23	- 1
(Ice cream, ready whipped topping; frozen dinners, meat and poultry pies, soups, etc., baby meat and combinations, fish sticks, and breaded shrimp; instant potato mixes, chips; canned soups; bread and rolls, crackers, biscuits, cookies, tidbits, frozen and ready-to-eat sweet bakery goods, prepared cake and other mixes; salad dressings, jams, jellies, preserves, candy, gelatin desserts and puddings, frosting mixes, soup mixes, toppings, gravy mixes, fruit drinks, breakfast drinks; all other new products not classified)			
Accessories	7.69	7.64	+ 1
(Coffee, tea, cocoa; soft drinks; leavening agents, flavorings, condiments)			

¹Foods were arbitrarily classified into 4 categories by degree of processing.

²All consumption--whether at farm level or by institutions, restaurants, government, or households--is given in terms of retail store valuation. Excluded are those portions of a commodity used commercially in making some other products, such as the portion of flour output used in baked goods reported as consumed. Also excluded are infant formulas and alcoholic beverages.

Source: *Food Topics*, 19th Annual Study: What Consumers Spend, September 1966 issue; and *Supermarketing* (formerly called *Food Topics*), 29th Annual Consumer Expenditures Study, September 1976 issue.

Table 3. Share of food dollars in 1975, and percent change from 1965 for selected foods

Food	Share of each \$100 worth of food, 1975 ¹	Change from 1965 to 1975
		<i>Dollars</i> <i>Percent</i>
Presweetened cocoa	0.11	+120
Process cheese .....	.96	+113
Oils .....	.42	+ 62
Sugar	1.54	+ 62
Margarine .....	.93	+ 45
Cereal, ready-to-eat	1.00	+ 41
Natural cheese .....	.86	+ 32
Dry milk .....	.09	+ 29
Salad dressings .....	.58	+ 29
Plate dinners, entrees, soups, frozen	1.34	+ 26
Rice .....	.25	+ 25
Juices, frozen .....	.58	+ 21
Potato chips	1.11	+ 21
Fresh vegetables, not potatoes	7.74	+ 20
Condensed milk .....	.01	- 67
Lard .....	.15	- 55
Cream, fresh .....	.26	- 46
Butter .....	.71	- 43
Evaporated milk .....	.24	- 31
Cornmeal, hominy .....	.11	- 27
Dry beans, peas .....	.34	- 26
Sweet bakery goods, ready-to-eat ...	1.89	- 24
Eggs, shell	2.16	- 23
Potatoes, fresh	1.29	- 19
Pork and beans, canned .....	.18	- 18
Flour .....	.37	- 16
Ice cream	1.62	- 16

¹All consumption--whether at farm level or by institutions, restaurants, government, or households--is given in terms of retail store valuation. Excluded are those portions of a commodity used commercially in making some other products, such as the portion of flour output used in baked goods reported as consumed. Also excluded are infant formulas and alcoholic beverages.

Source: *Food Topics*, 19th Annual Study: What Consumers Spend, September 1966 issue; and *Supermarketing* (formerly called *Food Topics*), 29th Annual Consumer Expenditures Study, September 1976 issue.

Fresh vegetables accounted for almost 40 percent of the vegetable-fruit group, so the 20-percent increase between 1965 and 1975 in the share of food dollars for fresh vegetables had considerable influence on change in the total vegetable-fruit group in table 1.

Food with large decreases in 1975 in their share of food dollars included condensed milk, down 67 percent; lard and fresh cream, each down about 50 percent; butter, down 43 percent; cornmeal and hominy, dry beans and peas, ready-to-eat sweet bakery goods, and eggs in the shell, each down about 25 percent. As most of these individual food items also took less than 1 percent of the 1975 market, their decrease had little impact on their respective food group.

Limitations of Study

These comparisons were estimated for the country as a whole. Families of certain sizes or at certain economic levels may have changed their food purchasing patterns in various ways—some more and some less than these averages indicate. For example, one family may have shifted almost entirely from fresh foods to highly processed ones, while another may have shifted from processed to fresh ones.

Answers to questions about how individuals and households have modified their food consumption since 1965 will be answered by the 1977-78 Nationwide Food Consumption Survey now in progress.

The comparisons were for the share of consumption in terms of money value of foods at the time. Prices for most foods increased between 1965 and 1975 but not uniformly. Therefore, changes, or lack of them, were partly due to changes in the amount of the food used and partly due to the changes in relative prices.

In Conclusion

This study shows that U.S. consumers allocated their food dollars in 1975 much as they did in 1965. They continued to allot well over one-third to meat and meat alternates in 1975. They showed a slight tendency toward a lower allocation of funds for the milk and bread and cereal groups, offset by increases for prepared and partly prepared mixtures. Consumers also continued to show a preference for fresh foods—milk, meat, poultry, seafood, nuts, eggs, vegetables, and fruit—allocating almost half of their food money to these foods.

FARM POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES: 1976

Approximately 8¼ million persons, or 3.9 percent of the total U.S. population, lived on farms in April 1976.¹ Continuing a long-term downward trend, the 1976 estimate was about 600,000 or 6.9 percent smaller than in 1975, and almost 1.5 million or 15 percent lower than in 1970. The average annual decline in the total farm population between 1970 and 1976 was 2.7 percent; however, the rate of loss differed significantly between white and black

farm residents—2.2 and 9.2 percent, respectively.

Since 1970, the number of farm children under 14 years of age has dropped by a third, and their proportion of all farm people has declined from 26 to 20 percent. During this same period the number of farm persons 14 years old and over decreased only 9 percent. Much of the decline in children since 1970 can be attributed to the sharp drop in the birth rate.

¹ Figures are based on the definition of "farm" used from 1960 to 1975 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1977. *Current Population Reports*, Series Census—ERS P-27, No. 48.

RETIREMENT HISTORY STUDY

To assess the Social Security program's provisions for retired workers and to learn about patterns of retirement and the relationship of retirement to other changes that take place among persons in their sixties, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is conducting a 10-year longitudinal study of the retirement process. This article summarizes, from published SSA reports, the kind of information being collected and gives a few preliminary findings from the early years.

In spring of 1969, the first data were collected from 11,153 persons who were born between 1905 and 1911 (persons aged 58 to 63 in 1969). Subsequent data collections were at 2-year intervals and will continue until the respondents reach the 68 to 73-year age group. After 10 years the sample size is expected to be about 50 percent of the original because of death, respondent movement, or dropout. The sample selected for the study includes married men, and men and women who were not married at the time of the initial sampling. Married women were excluded because preliminary interviews found most married women of this generation identify their retirement with their husbands' retirement.

Characteristics in 1969

Work life. The study defined retirement as the stoppage of work by persons past age 55 or 60. The respondents were asked to define their work status as completely retired, partly retired, or not retired. In 1969, 17 percent of the entire sample described themselves as completely retired and 9 percent said they were partly retired. Women were more likely not to be working (42 percent) than were men (16 percent). Married men were more likely to be working full time than men with no wives present—77 percent of the men with wives in the household were working full time as compared with only 59 percent of the men with no wives present.

Twenty-two percent of the workers in the sample in 1969 reported earnings at the rate of at least \$10,000 a year; 7 percent were earning less than \$2,500. Of the working women,

4 percent were earning at the rate of \$10,000 or more at the time of the survey; 24 percent earned less than \$2,500.

Health. Data on the health status of respondents were obtained by self-assessment, that is, how respondents rated their health compared with other persons in their same age group. Also, respondents were asked about their work and mobility limitations, expenditures and insurance for health care, and need for medical attention. Sixty-nine percent of those who reported themselves as completely retired in 1969 left their last jobs because of poor health. Of those reported as partly retired, 49 percent cited health as the reason. Three-fourths of the respondents considered themselves as healthy as or healthier than other people their age (see table). More than three-fifths of the married men and the unmarried women reported no physical or job-related disabilities in 1969. Only about half of the men without spouses reported no disabilities.

The deterioration of health that comes with the aging process may change the expenditures for medical care of persons in the sample. Medical insurance plans and benefits often stop, become limited, or cost more to continue after retirement. Not only the changes in expenditures for medical care due to anticipated poorer health, but also the shifts in the manner of paying for medical services and the extent to which current public health insurance programs (Medicare) are meeting the financial as well as medical needs of older persons will be observed in the Retirement History Study (RHS).

Living arrangements. Ninety-seven percent of the sample lived in houses or apartments in 1969. The rest lived in hotels, rooming houses, or trailers. About 9 percent lived on farms. A small percentage at ages 58 to 63 had their housing paid for, all or in part, by other family members. More than half of the respondents lived alone (or with spouse only in the case of married men); about one-third of those with children reported any living in the household. The nonmarried women tended to have more

rooms per person in the household than the other groups. This can be explained in part by the number of widows (64 percent of the women on the panel), many of whom were living in the family house.

As respondents age, the various components of housing status such as space requirements, mobility of older persons, and companionship needs can be expected to change. To study these changes, respondents have been asked to report on the employment of outside household help, the presence of elderly parents or other relatives or nonrelated persons in the household, whether any support is given to or received from relatives, and the degree of communication between respondent and relatives outside the household.

Expenditures. Differences in spending patterns associated with income level have been revealed in many cross-sectional surveys. However, the longitudinal data of the Retirement History Study should provide a clearer picture of the changes in spending patterns, as persons go from preretirement to retirement and experience changes in income and activity. Monitoring expenses, along with the personal

information gathered in the study over the 10-year period, will also provide information on the style of living outside of working life in the later years and may lead toward improved social welfare programs for the Nation's older population.

Expenditures for housing, which include taxes, insurance, and utilities, may cause financial strain because of diminished and possibly fixed incomes and rising prices. Market values are increasing rapidly, which means that an owned home in retirement can be a greater financial asset than anticipated when purchased. However, higher taxes, which come with increased market value, may counterbalance the financial advantage of homeownership in the retirement years. An evaluation of the extent to which home ownership is an investment and the extent to which it is a financial burden in later years may be possible through the RHS.

Food expenditures generally show little immediate response to changes in income, although some "luxury" foods are usually cut out as income declines. Another factor affecting food expenditures in retirement may be a reduction in food purchased at work. Food

Health self-assessment of persons 58 to 63 years old in 1969

Item	Spouse present	No spouse present	
	Men	Men	Women
<i>Percent</i>			
Self-reported health status:			
Better than others of same age	35	28	35
Same as others of same age	42	41	39
Worse than others of same age	19	27	20
Don't know	3	4	5
Work limitations:			
No limitations	63	53	61
Mobility limitation only	4	2	3
Work limitation	33	44	36

Source: Motley, D.K. 1972. Health in the years before retirement. *Social Security Bulletin* 35 (12): 18-36. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social Security Administration.

purchased for use at home generally costs less than food purchased away from home; as more meals are prepared at home and as lower caloric needs of older, less active persons are taken into account, per person food costs may decrease. On the other hand, if dining out becomes a leisure-time activity, food costs may increase.

Transportation costs can be expected to change with the retirement process since there are no longer costs of commuting to and from work. However, with the retirement process may come new transportation needs and costs. Recreational travel may be an added component of transportation expense, particularly among higher income groups. A change of locale (moving to a new area) may affect transportation costs. Finally, declining mobility that comes with the aging process will change the transportation needs of this group.

Changes in 1973

Over the 4-year period from 1969 to 1973, the proportion of men working declined from 84 percent to 47 percent. Among the women interviewed, only 33 percent were working in 1973 compared with 58 percent in 1969. Two percent of the respondents were not working in 1969 but were reported working in 1973. Nearly one-fifth of the full-time workers switched to part-time during this 4-year period. Cessation of work was accompanied by a reduction

in total income of about 40 to 45 percent, measured in constant dollars, over the 4-year period.¹ This meant that the purchasing power of retirees interviewed in 1973 was barely over half their purchasing power in the 4 years earlier. Nonmarried men were much better off before they stopped working than nonmarried women, but afterward the incomes of both groups were approximately the same.

A much larger proportion of women than men moved to a different housing unit between 1969 and 1973. Thirty percent of the men's households and 40 percent of the women's households included an adult relative in 1969. This had dropped to 8 percent and 23 percent, respectively, by 1973. Sixteen percent of the nonmarried men had married by 1973; few women had.

¹ Based on the total income for the years immediately prior to reporting periods.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Social Security Administration, *Social Security Bulletins*: Bond, K., 1976, Retirement History Study's first four years: Work, health, and living arrangements, 39 (12): 3-14, 40; Fox, A., 1976, Work status and income change, 1968-72: Retirement History Study preview, 39 (12): 15-31; Irelan, L. M., 1972, Retirement History Study: Introduction, 35 (11): 3-8. Irelan, L. M., Motley, D. K., Murray, J., Schwab, K., and Sherman, S. R., 1976, *Almost 65: Baseline data from the Retirement History Study*, U.S. Dept. Health, Ed., and Welfare, Social Security Admin., 165 pp.

SOCIAL WELFARE EXPENDITURES, FISCAL YEAR 1976

Expenditures under public social welfare programs during fiscal year 1976 rose 15.7 percent or \$45 billion, down moderately from the 19.7 percent increase and record dollar advance of \$47 billion recorded a year earlier. As in 1975, two major factors in the abnormally high rate of increase were the continued efforts of the Government to cope with the 1974-75 recession and the continuing inflation. Benefits for the needy and the unemployed expanded

further, while higher prices triggered cost-of-living adjustments in cash benefits and added to the cost of providing social welfare services.

Expenditures for social insurance programs (OASDHI—old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance; railroad and public employee retirement; unemployment insurance; and workmen's compensation) accounted for 44 percent of the total bill for social welfare. Aid to education accounted for 26 percent, and

Social welfare expenditures, fiscal year 1976

Program	Million dollars	Percent distribution	Percent increase, 1975-76
Total social welfare	331,366	100	15.7
Social insurance	146,592	44	19.2
Public aid	48,946	15	20.2
Health and medical programs	19,193	6	10.1
Veterans' programs	19,006	6	11.7
Education	86,426	26	10.9
Housing	3,127	1	5.4
Other ¹	8,076	2	7.2

¹Housing, vocational rehabilitation, institutional care, child nutrition, child welfare, and special programs.

Source: Skolnik, A.M., and Sophie, R.D. 1977. Social Welfare expenditures, fiscal year 1976. *Social Security Bulletin* 40 (1): 3-19. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Social Security Administration.

public aid (public assistance, supplemental security income, food stamps, and emergency employment and manpower training program) for 15 percent (see table).

The largest growth between 1975 and 1976 was for unemployment insurance and employment security programs: an increase of 43 percent. Public aid programs rose 20 percent during the year. Increases in unemployment insurance and public aid were directly affected by the 1974-75 recessions and Government efforts to cope with it. Other income-maintenance programs saw large increases because of cost-of-living adjustments triggered by inflation.

The combination of recession and inflation made social welfare expenditures grow at a faster pace than the economy. Such expenditures were 20.6 percent of the gross national product (GNP) in 1976, up from 17.6 percent in the prerecession year of 1974.

The impact of these higher social welfare expenditures continued to be felt chiefly by the Federal Government. Three-fifths of all public expenditures for social welfare purposes were federally funded in 1976, compared with 58 percent in 1975 and 53 percent in 1970; the balance was funded through State and local governments. The amount spent for social welfare absorbed 56 percent of the Federal budget in 1976, compared with 54 percent in 1975 and 40 percent in 1970. State and local jurisdictions also experienced an upward trend, although to a much lesser degree, reporting 67 percent of their expenditures devoted to social welfare in 1976 and 64 percent in 1970.

Source: Skolnik, A. M., and Sophie, R. D. 1977. Social welfare expenditures, fiscal year 1976. *Social Security Bulletin* 40 (1): 3-19. (U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare. Social Security Administration.)

LENGTH OF WORKING LIFE, 1970

In 1900, men averaged five times as many years in the labor force as women; by 1970 that ratio had fallen to less than twice as many years. The ratio would be even lower except that many married women still interrupt their careers to have children, to move to new locations with their husbands, or for other reasons. Women also tend to retire somewhat earlier than men, at an average age of about 60 years.

The average number of years spent in the labor force by men rose from 32.1 in 1900 to 41.5 in 1950, but declined slightly to 40.1 by 1970—mostly because of a slow decline in labor force participation among men over age 55. While working-life expectancy of men has increased about 10 years since 1900, life expectancy at birth has climbed by almost 20 years—from 48.2 to 67.1. Thus, the average time not in the labor force has risen dramatically. Practically all of the nonwork activity of men at the turn of the century occurred before

they entered the labor force. Now a large proportion of the nonwork years are spent in retirement, although an extended period of education has also delayed labor force entry for many men.

Since 1900 the overall life expectancy of women has increased from 50.7 years to 74.8 years, almost 50 percent. Of the 24 additional years, over two-thirds have been added to working life. The worklife expectancy of women climbed from 6.3 to 22.9 years between 1900 and 1970. After 1950 the work-life expectancy among women rose at a faster rate than overall life expectancy, and time spent out of the labor force began to decline.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Length of working life for men and women, 1970. *Special Labor Force Report 187*. (Revised and reprinted from Feb. 1976 *Monthly Labor Review*.)

MARITAL COMPOSITION OF THE LABOR FORCE

Married persons' share of the labor force has been declining in recent years, while that of unmarried persons has been increasing. From March 1970 to March 1976, married persons' share of the labor force dropped from 69.2 to 64.7 percent. Over this same period, the proportion of persons in the work force who have never been married grew from 20.1 to 23.2 percent, and that of divorced and separated persons rose from 6.8 to 9.2 percent. Several factors accounted for this gradual change in the profile of the labor force: The continuation of the long-term decline in the participation rate of married men, which was not completely counterbalanced by the rise for married women; and the rapid increase of young people in the population and in the labor force, many of whom are remaining single longer.

There were 14.9 million mothers in the labor force in March 1976, 11.7 million of whom were married and living with their husbands. The labor force participation rate for wives with children under 18 years old rose to 46.1 percent in March 1976, while the rate for wives without children remained the same—43.8 percent. About 74 percent of divorced mothers with children under 18 were in the labor force, as were about 50 percent of widowed mothers and 45 percent of never-married mothers.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Married persons share of the labor force declining, BLS study shows. U.S. Dept. of Labor Press Release No. 77-191, March 1977.

COST OF FOOD AT HOME

Cost of food at home estimated for food plans at 4 cost levels, June 1977, U.S. average¹

Sex-age groups	Cost for 1 week				Cost for 1 month			
	Thrifty plan ²	Low-cost plan	Moderate-cost plan	Liberal plan	Thrifty plan ²	Low-cost plan	Moderate-cost plan	Liberal plan
<i>Dollars</i>								
FAMILIES								
Family of 2: ³								
20-54 years	23.60	31.20	39.20	47.10	102.40	135.50	170.00	204.10
55 years and over	21.20	27.90	34.60	41.40	92.20	121.20	149.70	179.30
Family of 4:								
Couple, 20-54 years and children--								
1-2 and 3-5 years	33.20	43.40	54.10	65.00	144.00	188.20	234.90	282.00
6-8 and 9-11 years	40.00	52.30	65.60	78.80	173.20	226.60	284.40	341.50
INDIVIDUALS ⁴								
Child:								
7 months to 1 year	4.70	5.80	7.10	8.40	20.50	25.20	30.90	36.60
1-2 years	5.30	6.80	8.40	10.00	23.00	29.60	36.50	43.50
3-5 years	6.40	8.20	10.10	12.20	27.90	35.40	43.90	53.00
6-8 years	8.20	10.60	13.30	16.00	35.50	46.00	57.70	69.30
9-11 years	10.30	13.30	16.70	20.00	44.60	57.40	72.20	86.70
Male:								
12-14 years	11.00	14.10	17.70	21.20	47.50	61.00	76.50	91.90
15-19 years	12.10	15.60	19.60	23.60	52.30	67.60	84.70	102.10
20-54 years	11.80	15.60	19.70	23.80	51.10	67.50	85.40	103.00
55 years and over	10.50	13.80	17.20	20.70	45.60	59.90	74.30	89.60
Female:								
12-19 years	9.80	12.70	15.70	18.80	42.50	54.80	68.00	81.30
20-54 years	9.70	12.80	15.90	19.00	42.00	55.70	69.10	82.50
55 years and over	8.80	11.60	14.30	16.90	38.20	50.30	61.80	73.40
Pregnant	12.30	15.90	19.50	23.20	53.40	68.80	84.60	100.60
Nursing	13.00	16.80	20.90	24.90	56.40	72.80	90.70	107.70

¹Assumes that food for all meals and snacks is purchased at the store and prepared at home. Estimates for each plan were computed from quantities of foods published in the Winter 1976 (thrifty plan) and Winter 1975 (low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal plans) issues of *Family Economics Review*. The costs of the food plans were first estimated using prices paid in 1965-66 by households from USDA's Household Food Consumption Survey with food costs at 4 selected levels. These prices are updated by use of "Estimated Retail Food Prices by Cities" released monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

²Coupon allotment in the Food Stamp Program based on this food plan.

³10 percent added for family size adjustment. See footnote 4.

⁴The costs given are for individuals in 4-person families. For individuals in other size families, the following adjustments are suggested: 1-person--add 20 percent; 2-person--add 10 percent; 3-person--add 5 percent; 5-or-6-person--subtract 5 percent; 7-or-more-person--subtract 10 percent.

CONSUMER PRICES

Consumer price index for urban wage earners and clerical workers

(1967 = 100)

Group	June 1977	May 1977	April 1977	June 1976
All items	181.8	180.6	179.6	170.1
Food	193.6	191.7	190.9	180.9
Food at home	191.9	189.8	189.3	179.7
Food away from home	200.6	199.3	197.5	185.6
Housing	189.0	187.6	186.7	176.5
Shelter	190.3	188.9	187.7	178.2
Rent	152.9	152.2	151.6	144.4
Homeownership	203.9	202.3	201.0	190.7
Fuel and utilities	201.8	200.2	199.4	181.7
Fuel oil and coal	283.1	282.6	282.0	247.3
Gas and electricity ...	213.0	210.9	209.8	188.5
Household furnishings and operation	177.1	175.9	175.4	168.5
Apparel and upkeep	153.9	153.4	152.3	146.9
Men's and boys'	153.8	154.3	153.1	146.7
Women's and girls'	146.0	144.7	143.6	140.9
Footwear	156.8	157.0	156.2	149.5
Transportation	179.2	178.2	176.8	165.9
Private	178.7	177.8	176.3	165.0
Public	183.2	181.5	180.4	173.6
Health and recreation	173.2	172.3	171.4	162.8
Medical care	201.8	200.5	199.1	183.7
Personal care	170.6	169.5	168.4	159.8
Reading and recreation ..	157.6	156.8	156.0	150.9
Other goods and services	158.4	158.0	157.7	153.2

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

U.S. WORKERS AND THEIR JOBS: THE CHANGING PICTURE

"U.S. Workers and Their Jobs: The Changing Picture" is a new chartbook issued by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. This brief chartbook is based on data from some of the Bureau's major statistical series and illustrates patterns of change in the American economy and labor force. Colorful charts are used to show movements of

wages, prices, productivity, employment, education, and union membership over the years.

The chartbook, Bulletin 1919, is for sale for 60 cents a copy from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock No. 029-001-01917-3).

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